

## Wage and Hour Division, Labor

## § 531.51

303(a), title III, Restriction on Garnishment, of the Consumer Credit Protection Act (82 Stat. 163, 164; 15 U.S.C. 1671 *et seq.*). The application of title III is discussed in part 870 of this chapter. When the payment to a third person of moneys withheld pursuant to a court order under which the withholdings exceeds that permitted by the CCPA, the excess will not be considered equivalent to payment of wages to the employee for purpose of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

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### § 531.40 Payments to employee's assignee.

(a) Where an employer is directed by a voluntary assignment or order of his employee to pay a sum for the benefit of the employee to a creditor, donee, or other third party, deduction from wages of the actual sum so paid is not prohibited: *Provided*, That neither the employer nor any person acting in his behalf or interest, directly or indirectly, derives any profit or benefit from the transaction. In such case, payment to the third person for the benefit and credit of the employee will be considered equivalent, for purposes of the Act, to payment to the employee.

(b) No payment by the employer to a third party will be recognized as a valid payment of compensation required under the Act where it appears that such payment was part of a plan or arrangement to evade or circumvent the requirements of section 3(m) or subpart B of this part. For the protection of both employer and employee it is suggested that full and adequate record of all assignments and orders be kept and preserved and that provisions of the applicable State law with respect to signing, sealing, witnessing, and delivery be observed.

(c) Under the principles stated in paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section, employers have been permitted to treat as payments to employees for purposes of the Act sums paid at the employees' direction to third persons for the following purposes: Sums paid, as authorized by the employee, for the purchase in his behalf of U.S. savings stamps or U.S. savings bonds; union dues paid pursuant to a collective bargaining

agreement with bona fide representatives of the employees and as permitted by law; employees' store accounts with merchants wholly independent of the employer; insurance premiums (paid to independent insurance companies where the employer is under no obligation to supply the insurance and derives, directly or indirectly, no benefit or profit from it); voluntary contributions to churches and charitable, fraternal, athletic, and social organizations, or societies from which the employer receives no profit or benefit directly or indirectly.

### PAYMENT OF WAGES TO TIPPED EMPLOYEES

### § 531.50 Statutory provisions with respect to tipped employees.

(a) With respect to tipped employees, section 3(m) provides:

In determining the wage of a tipped employee, the amount paid such employee by his employer shall be deemed to be increased on account of tips by an amount determined by the employer, but not by an amount in excess of 50 per centum of the applicable minimum wage rate, except that in the case of an employee who (either himself or acting through his representative) shows to the satisfaction of the Secretary that the actual amount of tips received by him was less than the amount determined by the employer as the amount by which the wage paid him was deemed to be increased under this sentence, the amount paid such employee by his employer shall be deemed to have been increased by such lesser amount.

(b) "Tipped employee" is defined in section 3(t) of the Act as follows:

*Tipped employee* means any employee engaged in an occupation in which he customarily and regularly receives more than \$20 a month in tips.

### § 531.51 Conditions for taking tip credits in making wage payments.

The wage credit permitted on account of tips under section 3(m) may be taken only with respect to wage payments made under the Act to those employees whose occupations in the workweeks for which such payments are made are those of "tipped employees" as defined in section 3(t). Under section 3(t), the occupation of the employee must be one "in which he customarily and regularly receives more than \$20 a

month in tips.” To determine whether a tip credit may be taken in paying wages to a particular employee it is necessary to know what payments constitute “tips,” whether the employee receives “more than \$20 a month” in such payments in the occupation in which he is engaged, and whether in such occupation he receives these payments in such amount “customarily and regularly.” The principles applicable to a resolution of these questions are discussed in the following sections.

**§ 531.52 General characteristics of “tips.”**

A tip is a sum presented by a customer as a gift or gratuity in recognition of some service performed for him. It is to be distinguished from payment of a charge, if any, made for the service. Whether a tip is to be given, and its amount, are matters determined solely by the customer, and generally he has the right to determine who shall be the recipient of his gratuity. In the absence of an agreement to the contrary between the recipient and a third party, a tip becomes the property of the person in recognition of whose service it is presented by the customer. Only tips actually received by an employee as money belonging to him which he may use as he chooses free of any control by the employer, may be counted in determining whether he is a “tipped employee” within the meaning of the Act and in applying the provisions of section 3(m) which govern wage credits for tips.

**§ 531.53 Payments which constitute tips.**

In addition to cash sums presented by customers which an employee keeps as his own, tips received by an employee include, within the meaning of the Act, amounts paid by bank check or other negotiable instrument payable at par and amounts transferred by the employer to the employee pursuant to directions from credit customers who designate amounts to be added to their bills as tips. Special gifts in forms other than money or its equivalent as above described such as theater tickets, passes, or merchandise, are not counted as tips received by the employee for purposes of the Act.

**§ 531.54 Tip pooling.**

Where employees practice tip splitting, as where waiters give a portion of their tips to the busboys, both the amounts retained by the waiters and those given the busboys are considered tips of the individuals who retain them, in applying the provisions of section 3(m) and 3(t). Similarly, where an accounting is made to an employer for his information only or in furtherance of a pooling arrangement whereby the employer redistributes the tips to the employees upon some basis to which they have mutually agreed among themselves, the amounts received and retained by each individual as his own are counted as his tips for purposes of the Act.

**§ 531.55 Examples of amounts not received as tips.**

(a) A compulsory charge for service, such as 10 percent of the amount of the bill, imposed on a customer by an employer's establishment, is not a tip and, even if distributed by the employer to his employees, cannot be counted as a tip received in applying the provisions of section 3(m) and 3(t). Similarly, where negotiations between a hotel and a customer for banquet facilities include amounts for distribution to employees of the hotel, the amounts so distributed are not counted as tips received. Likewise, where the employment agreement is such that amounts presented by customers as tips belong to the employer and must be credited or turned over to him, the employee is in effect collecting for his employer additional income from the operations of the latter's establishment. Even though such amounts are not collected by imposition of any compulsory charge on the customer, plainly the employee is not receiving tips within the meaning of section 3(m) and 3(t). The amounts received from customers are the employer's property, not his, and do not constitute tip income to the employee.

(b) As stated above, service charges and other similar sums which become part of the employer's gross receipts are not tips for the purposes of the Act. However, where such sums are distributed by the employer to his employees, they may be used in their entirety to